

Message Text

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AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

C O N F I D E N T I A L HAMBURG 0621

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJ: RESULTS OF THE APRIL 13, 1975 LAND ELECTIONS IN
SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN

REF: HAMBURG 0613

1. DESPITE THE RETENTION OF ITS MAJORITY IN THE LANDTAG IN KIEL, THE CDU, NEVERTHELESS, SUFFERED A STUNNING PSYCHOLOGICAL SETBACK IN THE APRIL 13 LANDTAG ELECTIONS IN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN BY FAILING TO BETTER ITS ELECTORAL TRIUMPH IN THE COMMUNAL ELECTIONS OF MARCH 1974 WHEN THE PARTY RECEIVED 53.1 PERCENT OF THE VOTE CAST OR EVEN TO EQUAL THE 51.9 PERCENT IT RECEIVED IN THE LANDTAG ELECTION OF APRIL 1971. THE SPD ALSO SUFFERED A SIMILAR SETBACK BUT OF A SLIGHTER MAGNITUDE. THE FDP WAS THE ONLY CLEAR VICTOR IN THIS RACE, INCREASING ITS PERCENTAGE OF THE OVERALL VOTE BY A DRAMATIC 3.3 PERCENT RISE IN COMPARISON WITH WHAT THE PARTY RECEIVED IN THE LANDTAG ELECTIONS IN 1971.

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2. THE FINAL RESULTS COMPARED WITH THE PERCENTAGES THE PARTIES RECEIVED IN THE 1971 LANDTAG ELECTIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS: CDU - 50.4 PERCENT (MINUS 1.5 PERCENT); SPD - 40.1 PERCENT (MINUS 0.9 PERCENT); FDP - 7.1 PERCENT (PLUS 3.3 PERCENT); SSW - 1.4 PERCENT (UNCHANGED) THE REMAINING PARTIES RECEIVED A TOTAL OF 1.0 PERCENT. THESE RESULTS WILL CHANGE THE COMPOSITION OF THE NEW LANDTAG AS FOLLOWS: THE CDU WILL HAVE 37 DEPUTIES (MINUS THREE); THE SPD WILL HAVE 30 DEPUTIES (MINUS 2); THE FDP WILL HAVE 5 DEPUTIES (PLUS 5); AND THE SÜDSCHLESWIGISCHER WÄHLERVERBAND (SSW), THE POLITICAL PARTY OF THE DANISH MINORITY, WILL RETAIN ITS SINGLE DEPUTY IN THE LANDTAG. THE CDU, WILL THEREFORE, WITH 37 DEPUTIES HAVE AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF ONE OVER THE COMBINED FORCES OF THE SPD, THE FDP AND THE SSW WITH 36 DEPUTIES IN ALL.

3. THOSE POLITICAL ANALYSTS MORE INCLINED TO BE SYMPATHETIC TO THE CDU WOULD, BY COMPARING THE RESULTS OF THIS ELECTION WITH THE BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS IN 1972 MAKE A MORE FAVORABLE CASE FOR THE CDU'S RESULTS IN YESTERDAY'S ELECTION. THE POINT COULD BE MADE THAT BY COMPARISON WITH THE 1972 BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS THE CDU RECEIVED 8.4 PERCENT MORE THAN THE PARTY RECEIVED THREE YEARS AGO WHILE THE SPD AND THE FDP RESPECTIVELY LOST 8.5 PERCENT AND 1.5 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. HOWEVER, THIS WOULD, IN OUR OPINION, BE A MISLEADING ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AS WE SEE THEM IN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN.

4. THERE WERE, AS WE REPORTED IN A-7 OF MARCH 13, 1975, TWO SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONS WHICH THE VOTERS WERE ASKED TO DECIDE YESTERDAY. ONE WAS WHETHER THE FDP COULD SURVIVE AS A POLITICAL PARTY IN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN. THE ANSWER WAS A RESOUNDING "YES". NOT ONLY DID THE FDP REBOUND FROM ITS FAILURE TO CROSS THE 5 PERCENT THRESHOLD IN THE LANDTAG ELECTIONS IN 1971, BUT IT DID FAR BETTER THAN UWE RONNEBURGER, THE FDP STANDARD-BEARER, AND HIS PARTY PREDICTED IT WOULD. THE OTHER, AND MORE DRAMATIC QUESTION, WHICH THE VOTERS SEEMED TO ANSWER ALSO UNEQUIVOCALLY HAD TO DO WITH THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF THE INCUMBENT MINISTER-PRESIDENT GERHARD STOLTENBERG. DESPITE HIS PYRRHIC VICTORY AT THE POLLS, WE BELIEVE THAT STOLTENBERG HAS PROBABLY DASHED HIS CHANCES OF WINNING THE CDU CANDIDACY TO OPPOSE CHANCELLOR HELMUT SCHMIDT IN THE NATIONAL ELECTION OF 1976. CONFIDENTIAL

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5. WHILE WAITING FOR THE RETURNS TO COME IN AT THE LANDESHAUS IN KIEL LAST NIGHT, I HAD A OPPORTUNITY TO CHAT BRIEFLY WITH EACH OF THE PRINCIPAL CANDIDATES. KLAUS MATTHIESEN WAS OBVIOUSLY DISCOURAGED THAT THE SPD HAD NOT DONE AS WELL AS HIS PARTY DID IN THE 1972 BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS WHEN THE SPD RECEIVED 48.6 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN. NEVERTHELESS, MATTHIESEN SEEMED PLEASED TO HAVE HUMBLING STOLTENBERG AND SAID

THAT THE RESULTS WERE A CLEAR VOTE OF CONFIDENCE FOR THE SPD/FDP BONN COALITION GOVERNMENT.

6. UWE RONNEBURGER AGREED. HE ADMITTED THAT WHILE HIS PARTY HAD DONE EXTREMELY WELL IN THE COMMUNAL ELECTIONS IN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN IN 1974, WHEN IT RECEIVED 9 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, HE DID NOT EXPECT IT TO DO MUCH BETTER THAN CROSSING THE 5 PERCENT THRESHOLD IN THIS ELECTION. HE WAS, THEREFORE, EXTREMELY BUOYED BY THE RESULTS WHICH, HE SAID, VINDICATED HIS PARTY'S BELIEF THAT THERE WAS ROOM IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC FOR A GENUINELY LIBERAL PARTY OF THE CENTER. RONNEBURGER ALSO SAID THAT THE FDP PLANNED TO VOTE INDEPENDENTLY IN THE NEW LANDTAG AND THAT THE RECONSTITUTED STOLTENBERG GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE NO REASON TO CONSIDER THE FDP EITHER AN IPSO FACTO HOSTILE POLITICAL FRACTION IN THE LANDTAG OR A COMPLAISANT JUNIOR PARTNER OF THE SPD. THE FDP WOULD, HE STRESSED, CONSIDER AND VOTE ON ALL ISSUES IN THE LANDTAG ACCORDING TO THEIR MERITS AS SEEN BY THE FDP.

7. STOLTENBERG WAS OBVIOUSLY BADLY SHATTERED BY HIS PARTY'S SHOWING AT THE POLLS. ALTHOUGH HE APPEARED WEARY AND DISTRACTED AND ALTHOUGH HE MENTIONED SEVERAL TIMES THAT THE RESULTS WERE REASONABLY SATISFACTORY AND THE SECOND BEST THAT THE PARTY EVER RECEIVED IN A STATE ELECTION IN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN SINCE THE END OF THE WAR, THIS STATEMENT SOUNDED MELANCHOLIC AND HOLLOW. ALTHOUGH HE AVOIDED ANY SPECULATION ABOUT HIS OWN POLITICAL FUTURE, SOME OF HIS CLOSEST ADVISERS WERE NOT AS CIRCUMSPECT. IN CONVERSATIONS WITH UWE BARSCHER, CDU FLOORLEADER IN THE LANDTAG, AND HANS SCHAEFER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE KIELER NACHRICHTEN, EACH WROTE OFF STOLTENBERG AS A SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO MINISTER-PRESIDENT HELMUT KOHL OF RHEINLAND-PFALZ FOR THE PARTY MANTLE IN THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN 1976. BARSCHER AND OLAF VON BREVERN, ONE OF STOLTENBERG'S CONFIDENTIAL

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MOST TRUSTED CONFIDANTS, TOLD ME LAST NIGHT THAT EVEN IF STOLTENBERG STILL HOPED TO CHALLENGE KOHL IN THE RACE FOR THE PARTY'S NOMINATION TO OPPOSE SCHMIDT IN THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR, THAT HIS RAZOR-EDGE MAJORITY IN THE LANDTAG WOULD COMPEL HIM TO DEVOTE MORE TIME TO STATE AFFAIRS IN KIEL THAN TO NATIONAL PARTY POLITICS OUTSIDE THE STATE. THESE PARTY LOYALISTS THINK THAT STOLTENBERG REACHED THE APOGEE OF HIS PUBLIC CAREER FOUR YEARS AGO WHEN HE WAS FIRST ELECTED MINISTER-PRESIDENT OF SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN AND THAT THE PARTY'S FEEBLE SHOWING YESTERDAY MAY HAVE GIVEN THE COUP DE GRACE TO STOLTENBERG'S AMBITIONS FOR THE CHANCELLORSHIP A YEAR AND A HALF FROM NOW. THIS ASSESSMENT, IN OUR OPINION, IS OBJECTIVE AND REALISTIC. BROGAN

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